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# THE ETHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PAUL'S DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT

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## **Paul's Doctrine of the Spirit**

Whatever we may think of Paul's intellectual depth or reach, he was unquestionably not a modern in his method of thinking. Hence in approaching the study of his thought, no matter what the special topic of inquiry may be, it is necessary to transfer ourselves to his thought-world and give to his words their first-century meaning. The modern man is impressed by the uniformity of the world-process; Paul was impressed by the interruption of that process. We read the purpose of the Divine One in the ordinary happenings; he discerned it in the extraordinary happenings. We think in terms of the natural order; he thought in terms of the supernatural order. Supernaturalism is the key to Paulinism. But this is only saying that Paul was a man of his age, for the age was supernaturalistic. And supernaturalism was simply the attempt of primitive man to explain the phenomena of experience. This is not to disparage the intellectual power of Paul and his contemporaries. They are here designated primitive men only in the sense that their philosophical point of view was primitive.

In order to understand Paul's doctrine of the Spirit it is necessary to examine the monotheism of which it was a part. We misjudge this monotheism, if we regard it as being in all essential respects

the equivalent of modern philosophical theism. It seems rather to have been closer to contemporary polytheism than to the Christian theism which a later theologico-philosophy imagined it derived from the Bible. On the philosophical side the Israelites stood in great measure where the polytheistic nations about them stood; they, no less than the Babylonians, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, believed in a multiplicity of agencies as the only possible explanation of the multiplicity of phenomena. To be sure, the Israelites gave to the one God, Jahweh, a supremacy and absoluteness among the world-forces which was not paralleled in the pantheons of polytheism. But in so doing they did not make him the direct cause of all phenomena. Religiously, or, perhaps better, nationally, they were monotheistic; philosophically, they were polydynamic. The history of Hebrew thought shows why this is so; it makes very plain the fact that Israelitish monotheism was not arrived at metaphysically, but practically. It was not the intellectual achievement of Hebraic Platos and Aristotles but rather a practical conclusion to which Israelitish patriots, such as Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, were driven in the working out of their nation's destiny, as they tried to steer it through the whirlpool of eighth-century international politics.

While succeeding centuries made important modifications in this pre-exilic monotheism, they did not, down to the time of Paul, deprive it of its practical, non-metaphysical character.

This practical, Israelitish monotheism which Paul inherited was not a philosophy of the universe, referring all phenomena to one personal being. While it predicated the existence of one God, and only one, and he a person, it did not exclude from the cosmos other agencies, or personal beings, as causes of phenomena. Of this fact post-exilic Jewish literature gives abundant evidence. The Spirit of God was one of these agencies, and the sphere in which it operated was the experiences of men. It had to do, not with Satan and his hosts of evil spirits, not with nature-forces or the totality of the cosmic process, but exclusively with the phenomena of human experience. These phenomena, according to the view of Paul and his contemporaries, were divided into two groups. One group was made up of certain extraordinary experiences of the Christian life, denominate gifts, or charismata of the Spirit. Chief among these gifts were the following: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, the power of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, the power of ecstatic utterance, called speaking with tongues. The other group of phenomena which are regarded as manifestations of the Spirit are of an entirely different nature. They make their appearance in the ordinary relationships of men, and indicate certain attitudes, or states, of mind, which the Christian assumes toward others. They are designated by such

terms as love, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. These qualities of character Paul says are "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22, 23). To many students of Paul these two strikingly diverse groups of phenomena, which we may call the charismatic and the ethical, respectively, constitute more than a classification simply. They represent two widely differing views of the Spirit's workings, the charismatic view being the conception of the early church, the ethical view being Paul's distinctive doctrine of the Spirit.

It is not maintained by these students that Paul denied the presence of the Spirit in the charismatic, or extraordinary phenomena of the church, but that in his ethical view he pointed out a more excellent way, as set forth in his Song of Love in I Cor., chap. 13, and in so doing made one of the most bold and original departures from the beaten path ever attempted in the field of theoretical morals—an achievement which constitutes him an ethicist of the first rank, and puts him in a class to himself among the Christians of the apostolic age.

Whether or not, in view of the predominance of Paulinism in the New Testament, we are warranted in differentiating as sharply between the primitive Christian and the Pauline view of the workings of the Spirit, as it is customary to do, we believe to be open to question. We cannot, however, consider this problem here, but must pass to the consideration of the source of the so-called Pauline view, a question on which much study has been put and on which no unanimity has been reached, as

is witnessed by the numerous theories to which it has given rise. One theory traces Paul's view to the Old Testament; another traces it to Alexandrian Jewish sources; another traces it to Jewish tradition and the experiences of the Christian church which came within his view; another, which is made much of by Gunkel, traces it to Paul's own experience; still another traces it to the fact that Paul discovered in his work as a missionary, that the conduct of the Christians meant more for the advance of the messianic movement than the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and for this reason he regarded it as the evidence of the Spirit's activity, *par excellence*. This last mentioned theory is that of Dr. Wood, who in addition to this main influence finds a secondary influence in Paul's own experience.

While the limits of this paper forbid an examination of these various theories, we may pause to notice that, while they account for one or more features of Paul's doctrine of the ethical life as the pre-eminent manifestation of the Spirit, none of them seems to furnish the most direct approach to an explanation of the main fact itself. This direct approach seems rather to open to us as we undertake to determine the place Paul's ethic occupies in the larger program, which was embraced in his gospel of salvation.

### Paul's Ethic

In passing to a consideration of the Pauline ethic, we must remind ourselves that the apostle was no theoretical or philosophical ethicist. What he had to say regarding conduct is strikingly unlike scientific systems of ethics, which

seek to regulate human conduct by an equitable adjustment of the rights and duties existing between men and by a constructive application of the principles underlying these rights and duties to the various departments of life, such as relations existing between individuals, the family, the state and the world. Paul's utterances disclose no such program; he reveals no intention of constructing such a system of ethics. Hence, when we speak of Paul's ethic, we have in mind neither a system of ethical principles nor an elaborate list of virtues, but a single principle, which is applied to the various problems of life in a practical, non-scientific way. This principle is expressed variously, but is summed up by Paul in one word, *agape*. This is the all-inclusive principle of Paul's ethic.

In endeavoring to determine what Paul meant by *agape* it will be well not to confine ourselves simply to a study of the term itself and its cognates; we shall do well to examine the numerous references which he makes to his own conduct and to the ideals which guided him both generally and in particular cases. Our idea of *agape* will gain in accuracy as well as in vividness if we look at the apostle himself in action; his own life is the best commentary on his favorite word. If it is true, as Harnack says, that I Cor., chap. 13 is "the greatest, strongest, deepest thing Paul ever wrote," it is also true that I Cor., chap. 9, if less poetic, comes not a whit behind the Song of Love in its idealism. In that chapter the term *agape* does not occur, yet nothing in I Cor., chap. 13 more clearly or forcibly expresses the idea than that climatic statement: "I

am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some." In speaking of I Cor., chap. 13 Stanley says: "How the apostle's amanuensis must have paused to look up into his master's face at the sudden change in the style of his dictation, and seen his countenance lit up as it had been the face of an angel as this vision of divine perfection passed before him."<sup>1</sup> If there is any realism in this beautiful picture, what, we may ask, must have been the feelings of that amanuensis as he heard for the first time from the lips of the apostle the following synopsis of his autobiography, beginning: "We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God," and closing with the words, "giving no occasion of stumbling in anything, that our ministration be not blamed; but in everything commending ourselves, as ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; in pureness, in knowledge, in long suffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in love unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things"!

It is not possible to give a happy translation into English of the word

*agape*. However apt "charity" may once have been, it is no longer possible to use it. "Love" seems to be the best word available, but because of its various applications its precise meaning is not always clear. We can best convey Paul's thought by the use of several expressions, such as, "disinterested love," "neighbor love," "unselfishness," "altruism," "otherism." Stated differently, the principle of *agape* is exhibited when one's conduct is regulated, not by the dictates of one's own interests, pleasure, or comfort, or by the insistence on one's rights or by an appeal to justice, but by considering as primary the interests, pleasure, comfort, welfare, and happiness of others. This is the very essence of *agape*; it is this that receives the emphasis in the utterances of the apostle; it is this that is expressed most clearly and vividly and extensively in his letters.

Paul is well aware of the fact that men have rights, the Christian as much as anyone, but he is pronouncedly insistent that it is not Christian to demand their recognition by others. On the contrary, he advocates the renunciation of both personal and official rights and privileges in order that through *agape* higher ends may be served. As an apostle he was entitled to support at the hands of the churches he served, and had the right, as he emphatically reminds the churches at Thessalonica and Corinth, to demand such support, but with equal or greater emphasis he renounced this right in accordance with the principle of *agape*. In so doing he had two objects in view, first, to set the proper example before his converts, as expressed in the following

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *International Critical Commentary* on I Cor. in Vol. X.

to the Thessalonians: "For yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us: for we did not live an idle life among you, neither did we eat bread for nought at any man's hands, but in wearisome and troublesome labor we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you" (II Thess. 3:7, 8). Then in order to make his readers doubly certain that in thus waiving an ordinary right and privilege, which was universally recognized, he was setting before them the true Christian standard of conduct, he adds: "not because we have not the right, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you, that ye should imitate us" (II Thess. 3:9).

The second purpose which actuated Paul in following the dictates of *agape* and waiving his right to support at the hands of those to whom he ministered was that of winning converts to his gospel, or, having won them, to hold them true to himself and to his gospel and to further their advance therein. This point is strongly emphasized in the two letters to the Corinthians and is the occasion of I Cor., chap. 9. He insists that he has the right to eat and to drink, to lead about a wife, as do the rest of the apostles and the brothers of Jesus and that he and Barnabas had a right to abstain from manual labor and to demand a material support in return for their labor in things of the Spirit, it being a divine ordinance that they who proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel. Having thus asserted his rights almost to the point of rudeness, he contrasts therewith most sharply his actual method of procedure, saying: "But I have used none of these things." Then, for fear that his reference to these rights

may itself be misinterpreted by the Corinthians and construed as an indirect, covert appeal to them to do for him the very thing which he is declaring had not been done for him, he interrupts his line of thought in order that he may disavow any such intention and says: "And I write not these things that it may be so done in my case; for it were good for me rather to die than that any man should render my boasting on this point nugatory." This boasting, or glorying, which he guards more jealously than he does life itself, is nothing more or less than the canceling of his rights both personal and apostolic, in order that he may act from the principle of love. He expresses the thought thus: "What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel without charge, so as not to use to the full my right in the gospel."

Immediately upon this statement there follows his extended declaration of the general principle which served as the constant basis of his conduct and of which the specific questions just discussed with the Corinthians were simply cases in point. Somewhat abbreviated and slightly paraphrased, it runs as follows: "For although I was no man's slave, but on the contrary was absolutely free and independent of all men, I voluntarily enslaved myself to men of all types, in order that thereby I might win more men to Christ. To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win the Jew. To the Gentile I became as a Gentile, that I might win the Gentiles. When I was in the company of men whose powers of discernment were not sufficiently developed to free them from conscientious scruples

concerning questions of casuistry, which did not disturb me personally, I respected their timidity and fear and conformed my conduct to theirs in order that I might win them for Christ. I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some, by which I mean that I accommodate myself to every situation which presents itself, my purpose being not to serve my own ends, either by enjoying my privileges or by insisting on my rights, but to save as many men as possible. My rights are forgotten and buried in the larger task of seeking the best for my fellow-man. And were I to do otherwise, I should run the risk of being lost myself, and thereby of presenting the sorry spectacle of one who, having preached to others becomes himself rejected, or a castaway" (I Cor. 9:19-27).

A large portion of Paul's severe rebuke of the Corinthians, as found in the latter part of his second letter, has to do with this very question of disregarding his rights in the interest of the higher ethic of *agape*. He twice reminds his readers of the official authority, or right, given to him by the Lord to build them up or to tear them down, yet clearly shows his reluctance to use this authority, as is evidenced by his letters, through which he hoped to induce them to correct their ethical irregularities in his absence and thus spare him the necessity of coming to them in person and exercising his official authority and rights in the interest of correct living and a proper church discipline (II Cor. 10:8; 13:10). It was largely due to his waiving of his rights to material support as a proclaimer of the gospel, and particularly as an apostle, that he became discredited

in the eyes of the Corinthians. His detractors made capital of the fact that, whereas other missionaries, when visiting Corinth, deported themselves as soft-handed gentlemen of the cloth, demanding a respectable support in return for their intellectual and spiritual services, Paul lowered himself in the estimation of the church by earning his own living by means of arduous toil. To this belittling charge he replied in part as follows: "Did I commit a sin in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I preached to you the gospel of God without charge?" In spite of his working night and day, he seems to have been unable to supply his needs, for he proceeds as follows: "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them that I might minister unto you; and when I was present with you and was in want, I was not a burden on any man: For the brethren when they came from Macedonia supplied the measure of my want: and in everything I kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this glorying in the regions of Achaia" (II Cor. 11:7, 8-10).

From the letter to the church at Philippi we learn that it was that church which Paul robbed in order to minister to the Corinthians. In the Philippian passage it is interesting to see the other side of the picture. There also the apostle is scrupulously careful to assure his benefactors that he does not desire to seek the gift on his own account, but, as he says: "I seek for the fruit that increaseth to your account" (Phil. 4:17).

Such was the rule of conduct Paul imposed upon himself with a severity which

was all but ascetic. It is not a formal ethic suggesting the rigidity of cold-drawn steel; his impetuous utterances remind us rather of glowing sparks struck from the white-hot metal of an intense nature by the trip-hammer blows of a life of conflict. Beyond this principle of *agape* he had virtually no ethic, either for himself or for others. It occupies a large place in his writings and is the theme of many of his strongest and noblest utterances. In the five brief chapters which make up I Thessalonians he brings in the idea five times. One-fifth of I Corinthians is devoted to a discussion of spiritual gifts, to which Paul attaches great importance, yet all of them put together are of small importance as compared with *agape*. In Galatians, his freedom epistle, he warns his readers not to use the freedom into which they were called through the gospel as an occasion to the flesh, i.e., an occasion to assert their superiority over other members of the Christian community. Instead, he enjoins that through love they become slaves to one another—a thoroughgoing Paulinism, which he buttresses with the word: "For the whole law is fulfilled in this, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Thereupon follows his long catalogue of vices and virtues. The vices, fifteen or sixteen in number, according to the reading, are denominated the works of the flesh, that is, the nature of the man in whom the Spirit does not operate. The virtues are designated as the fruit of the Spirit; *agape* heads the list and virtually comprehends all the rest—long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control. To this catalogue is subjoined a succinct state-

ment, which puts Paul's ethic in a nutshell: "If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk" (Gal. 5:22, 23, 25). The life of the Christian is supernatural; his conduct must be supernatural also.

Nearly the entire so-called practical portion of Romans, namely, that portion which has to do with conduct, as found in chaps. 12-15, is hardly more or less than a diversified reiteration of the one all-inclusive principle of *agape*. In chap. 12, Paul exhorts each one not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; he enjoins that love be without hypocrisy, and directs that in love of the brethren his readers be tenderly affectioned one to another, in honor preferring one another. They are directed, further, to bless them that persecute them, to bless and curse not, and so completely to identify themselves with the needs and interests of others that they will rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep. He continued as follows: "Maintain a uniform attitude toward one another and dwell not exclusively on those things which carry distinction with them, but stoop to lowly affairs. Do not regard yourselves from the standpoint of superiority; nor return evil for evil. Let your deportment be such as will commend itself to everyone. As far as your conduct can make it possible, live at peace with all men. Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but leave the task of avenging to God, who, we are assured by Scripture, will take it in hand and in so doing will make it unnecessary for us to concern ourselves with it. But if thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirst, give him drink, for in this way



thou wilt disarm him and thereby render him harmless. Do not be conquered of evil, but conquer evil with good."

Chap. 13 continues the same thought. First, the doctrine of submission to the state is inculcated. Passing from this to personal relationships again, Paul says: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another; for he that loveth another has fulfilled the law. Love meets all the specific prohibitions of the decalogue, such as pertain to murder, theft and the rest, but it goes beyond these specifications. If there is any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love does no harm to one's neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of all legal requirements." Then follows a paragraph to the effect that, in view of the shortness of the time intervening before the Parousia, and in view of the fact that the culmination of salvation is nearer than when the Christians first believed, they should cast off the works of darkness, such as rioting, drunkenness, low acts of wantonness, strifes, and envyings.

The whole of chap. 14 is an exhortation to deal with others, particularly those with over-sensitive consciences, in the spirit of love. Some had scruples about eating, others about the observance of certain days; it is not for a Christian brother to judge such, since they as well as he are regulating their conduct with reference to a superior One, whom they recognize as Lord, namely, the One who to establish his lordship over men surrendered himself to death in a supreme act of love, and, through his resurrection, evinced such a power

over the forces of evil, as makes him worthy to be Lord both of the dead and the living. It is to such a Lord, who has subjugated us by love, that we owe supreme allegiance. This is the meaning of that oft-misapplied text: "None of us liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself" (Rom. 14:7). The question it presents is not whether we can live an isolated life or a life in the midst of our fellows, whether we shall exert an influence for good or bad in spite of ourselves. The question is whether we shall live a selfish life or an unselfish one, whether we shall plant ourselves on the assurance of our own superiority and assume a censorious and rasping attitude toward those who are not as fortunate as we in the measure of their enlightenment and intellectual acumen. "Let us not therefore judge one another any more as to these matters; but be very careful over something which is far more important, namely, that no man put a stumbling block, or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. . . . If through thy disregard of another in a small matter, such as eating and drinking, thou cause him to do violence to his conscience and thus perish, thou art not acting from the principle of love. Through thy self-centered conduct thou art destroying one for whom Christ, acting from the opposite principle of love, gave his life."

Chap. 15 proceeds with the thought unbroken, as follows: "We then that are strong ought to be considerate of the weak and not put our own pleasure first. Let each one of us please his neighbor so as to strengthen and help him. This is the only rule a Christian can go by, for his great Exemplar, Christ,

followed that rule and pleased not himself" (Rom. 15:3; see, further, Eph. 3:17-19; 4:1-3; 4:31-5:14; Phil. 2:1-11; Col. 3:12-17; I Thess. 1:3; 3:6, 12; 4:9; 5:8, 13).

Upon the basis of these extended references, and they constitute only a fraction of what the apostle had to say on the subject, we cannot be far from the truth when we conclude that for conduct to be Christian, from the point of view of Paul, it must be altruistic. To understand why Paul made love the essence of conduct it is necessary to examine the apostle's larger program of salvation, of which conduct was but a part. Here again we see that Paul was a practical religionist before he was a theologian.

He saw men dying with no hope of a life hereafter, and he was convinced that provision had been made whereby each one could escape this calamity. It was his task to persuade as many men as possible to effect this escape and to secure for themselves the blessed immortality which was provided in the gospel. It was in the working out of this larger problem that Paul developed his ethical ideas. For him the fundamental question was this: How many men escape death and attain to immortality? Paul's system of thought—his theology, as well as his ethic—is to be found in his answer to this question, and it is embraced in his three doctrines of redemption, faith, and love, respectively. In his doctrine of redemption we have God's share in the problem of man's rescue through Christ from the power of death, or Satan, the author of death. In his doctrine of faith we have man's share in the problem, i.e., the appropriation or utilization of redemption. In

his doctrine of love as the supreme manifestation of the Spirit's working we have God and man sharing together in the work of rescuing men from death, as Paul expresses it in the paradox: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Paul's ethic, therefore, as well as his doctrine of the Spirit, is a by-product of his dualistic supernaturalism, which heads up in his doctrine of salvation, or rescue from the supernatural powers—Satan and his hosts, who, unmolested, were effecting man's destruction.

The fact that we have given a secondary place to the apostle's ethic is not likely to be appreciated by the modern man, who realized more and more the importance of the ethical in the working out of the problems of today and tomorrow. But despite any disappointment which may arise over this fact and in spite of all that may be said in praise of the results of Paul's creative genius in the department of ethics, it must be confessed that for him the ethical was not primary. The eschatological, or apocalyptic salvation was the all-determining fact. The proof of this is abundant; we need cite only a few passages: "If our hope in Christ has reference to this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. . . . If from the point of view of an ordinary man, that is, with no outlook on a blessed immortality, I fought with beast-like men at Ephesus, what benefit was there in that for me? If the dead are not raised, and there is consequently no such immortality, then let us eat and drink, throw away our ethical ideals, and

become as the self-indulgent pagans about us, for tomorrow we die" (I Cor. 15:19, 32; see, further, Gal. 5:5, 6; I Cor. 9:23-27; I Thess. 3:11-13).

Having seen that Paul insisted on disinterested love as the only proper motive of Christian conduct, because only thereby was it possible to escape eternal death and attain to immortality, we must next ask how he came by such an idea. Why was *agape* and not some other quality of character made the human condition of this salvation? The answer to this question is found in an essential feature of Paul's conception of salvation. While, according to Paul, salvation was supernatural and eschatological, and involved a blessed immortality for both the bodies and spirits of men, it meant much more than an immortal existence; it provided for men ultimately an ontological assimilation to the likeness and nature of God. This is the meaning of Rom. 8:28-39: "We know that to those who love God all things work together to a happy cosmic consummation . . . because whom he foreknew he also set apart in advance to be conformed ultimately to the image of his Son, not the Son in his earthly humiliation, but his Son in his heavenly glory, in which state of unspeakable exaltation he is after all only *primus inter pares*, the first-born among many brethren." This assimilation to the nature of God is likewise at the basis of I Cor. 15:44: "Just as we have borne the image of the original type-man, the earthly Adam, of which fact men have overwhelming proof in their corruptible, disintegrating bodies that are doomed to destruction in consequence of Satan's power over them, so eventually we shall

bear the image of the second-type man, the One who came from heaven. That we shall ultimately be like him is forecast in Christ's resurrection, that first station in his triumphal march to the complete subjugation of the Powers of evil. For since his first decisive encounter with them was a victorious one, as his resurrection shows, so his ultimate subjugation of them is but a matter of time. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet, the last of whom is Death, or Satan. And when all these enemies shall have been subjected unto him then shall the Son also himself be subjected unto him that did subject all things unto him that God may be all in all. Nor are we left out of this cosmic program; the resurrection of Christ was no isolated example of the power of God over his enemies and ours. We are sons of God, as well as is Christ; his destiny shall be ours; his ascension exaltation we shall share; his heavenly body of glory is the prototype of what these vile bodies of ours shall be (see also II Cor. 3:19; Col. 1:15-21; 3:9-11).

It being of the very essence of Paul's doctrine of salvation that hereafter we are to bear the image of the heavenly, it followed logically from his conception of salvation that we should bear that image here on earth, for the actual realization of salvation had already begun for each believer, in one respect, namely, in his spirit. The body, to be sure, was mortal because of sin, but the spirit was immortal because of Christ's work of redemption (Rom. 8:10). While the body had to wait for its redemption till the Parousia brought the apocalypse of the sons of God, the spirit entered

upon its new and immortal existence just as soon as one committed himself to Christ and received the Holy Spirit in return, through which his own spirit received power to function in accordance with the nature of God, to which it had been assimilated. Since God's nature was love, it was necessary and inevitable that this spirit-nature of man which had already become like the nature of God should be love also, and, since it is only through conduct that man's spirit-nature can function and reveal itself, it follows that the essence of Christian conduct must be love. This we believe to be the fundamental idea lying back of the so-called distinctive Pauline doctrine that the manifestations of the Spirit are to be found pre-eminently in the ethical life of the Christian.

"Intellect was worshiped in Greece, and power in Rome; but where did St. Paul learn the surpassing beauty of love?" Thus write the authors of the *International Critical Commentary* on I Corinthians. In view of Hosea's tragedy-sermon on the love of God, as well as certain expressions in some of the Psalms, we should expect to find the ultimate source of Paul's doctrine of the love of God to be the Old Testament. But in spite of this antecedent probability, his utterances do not show this to have been the case. He finds in the Old Testament warrant for the statement that we are taught of God to love one another, but beyond this he does not go (see I Thess. 4:9; Rom. 13:8, 10; Gal. 5:14).

It is held that the source of Paul's knowledge that God is love is to be

traced to the life of Jesus and it has been suggested in support of this view that, if we substitute Jesus for love in I Cor., chap. 13, it "becomes a simple and perfect description of the historic Jesus."<sup>1</sup> In the injunction: "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ," there is a possible though not a certain reference to Jesus' life and teaching. The same may be said of the exhortation: "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor in such a way as to build him up in the things that are good. This is reasonable since Christ pleased not himself" (Rom. 15:1, 2). In Paul's parting words to the Ephesian elders there is certainly a reference to the teaching of Jesus: "In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Unfortunately, doubt attaches to the Pauline character of these words. There is but little to show, therefore, that Paul drew his doctrine of the love of God from the life of Jesus, a result which is not a little surprising in view of the fact that, if modern interpreters of Jesus are correct, Jesus' contribution to the thought of the world, judging by the Synoptic Gospels, was pre-eminently a setting forth of the love of God. What more natural than that Paul should have taken this fundamental thought of his Master and put it squarely in the center of his theological system! Attractive and plausible though this theory may be, it cannot be made out with certainty on

<sup>1</sup> *The Fifth Gospel*, p. 153.

the basis of a strict exegesis of Paul's letters. After all, probably we should have been prepared for this result by the statement: "Even if we have known Christ after the flesh yet now henceforth know we him in this respect no more" (II Cor. 5:16).

It was in the redemptive death of Jesus that Paul read the lesson of the love of God. He says: "For in the time when we were yet weak and helpless, Christ died for us ungodly ones, a rare, yes, almost unprecedented act of love, for scarcely ever does it happen that a man dies for another even when he is righteous. For a good man it is barely possible that one would undertake to die. But, granting the bare possibility of such evidences of love, they do not begin to approach the evidence we have of God's love for us, because he shows the measure of his love for us, in that while we were neither just nor good, but sinners openly opposed to him, Christ died on our behalf. But unprecedented as this act of love was, even it does not measure the love God has for us. The full measure of that love is seen only in God's carrying out for us of his whole salvation program. The death of Christ did not do this; but because it was a marvelous manifestation of God's love, it put an end to our hostility to God. That station passed, we are in position for the first time to become the objects of God's full love. For if we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life, not his earthly life, but his post-resurrection life, for it is as the risen Christ that he now reigns superior to the hosts of darkness and death, and is therefore able to carry out

to completion God's program of salvation from these powers" (Rom. 5:6-10). There is no lack of passages to show that it was the death of Christ that brought clearly to Paul's mind the truth that God is love (see Rom. 8:37-39; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:3-10; 4:32; 5:1, 2, 25; Col. 1:13; 3:13; II Thess. 2:25).

The results, so far arrived at in this study, may thus be summarized:

1. Paul was a supernaturalist, and, as such was a true exponent of his age.

2. Paul's doctrine of the Spirit is of a piece with his inherited Israelitish monotheism, which, while it recognized but one God, explained the multiplicity of phenomena by means of a multiplicity of agencies of this God, or beings subordinate to him.

3. The Spirit of God is one of these agencies, and the sphere in which it operates is human experience.

4. In the church of the apostolic age two views of the manifestations of the Spirit are discoverable, namely, the so-called primitive Christian, or charismatic view, and the so-called Pauline, or ethical view.

5. Paul, being a practical religionist and not a philosophical ethicist, his ethical ideas are set forth, not in systematic form, but in practical applications of an all-inclusive principle to the problems of conduct.

6. This principle, which Paul called *agape*, or love, he made the essence of conduct, because love is necessary to salvation.

7. Love is necessary to salvation, because ultimately salvation means that the believer is to be assimilated to the likeness and nature of God. Since the

nature of God is love, Christian conduct, which, according to Paul, is the outward expression of the God-nature within, must be determined by love.

8. The source of Paul's doctrine that God is love, seems to be neither the Old Testament nor the earthly life and

teaching of Jesus, but that supreme demonstration on the part of Jesus of his love for men, namely, his redemptive death.

In a subsequent paper the adaptability of the ethics of Paul to our times will be considered.

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## MAKING OVER RELIGIOUS DEMOCRACY

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It is a characteristic of life that it is always in process. It is evidence of vitality in the Christian church that it is undergoing continual change. Nowhere is this change going on more strikingly than in the making over of such independent democratic churches as the Baptist and Congregationalist churches in the United States.

Both of these bodies find their immediate ancestry in the Independents of Great Britain, their remoter kin in the Anabaptists of the Continent, their prototype in the Christians of the primitive church. They organized their independent congregations on the basis of a converted membership, and claimed independence of any hierarchy of clergy or church courts. Yet there was a period of experiment before the normal Congregational type was produced.

### **Coquetting with Presbyterianism**

The Reformed churches on the Continent retained the Catholic custom of resorting to ecclesiastical courts for

administration, counsel, and discipline. It is not strange therefore that, when the German Anabaptists organized as a separate sect in 1527, they provided for a district council and a superintendent over the churches of the district, and arranged further for a synod above the council. In England the General Baptists organized an association early in the seventeenth century, which for a time took cognizance of cases of discipline, heard appeals from the churches, and appointed elders or overseers to plant new churches and to have a modified control over all the churches in the association that elected them. Not content with associations, the General Baptists organized general assemblies which exercised a right of appeal from churches and associations. In both Germany and England, however, these experiments were short lived, as both bodies declined rapidly.

English speaking Congregationalists started as democratic bodies. Their standard bearer, Robert Browne, laid